

Meditation – Loved, Laughed, Cried - 25th January 2022

Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu (Arch)died on 26th December 2021.

You may remember him as a small, charismatic, energetic, laughing man, who exuded a great love of his fellow mankind.

This meditation reflects on words written by Archbishop John Sentamu in which he says Desmond Tutu would have liked his epitaph to say that he "loved, laughed, cried".

Friends shared with me many quotations, published in the media following Arch's death, which emphasise the faith, belief and hope that Tutu taught us to possess, drawing on the fundamental guidelines for life which Jesus gave us.

"Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness."

"There comes a point where we need to stop just pulling people out of the river. We need to go upstream and find out why they are falling in."

"For all the horrors he saw, he was certain that human beings were "made by goodness for goodness"—that everyone can repent. He drew comfort even from the evening headlines. "If wrong was the norm, it wouldn't be news," he wrote. Part of his charm—and his persuasiveness—lay in his mischievous sense of humour. "

"Arch's love transformed the lives of politicians and priests, township dwellers and world leaders. The world is different because of this man."

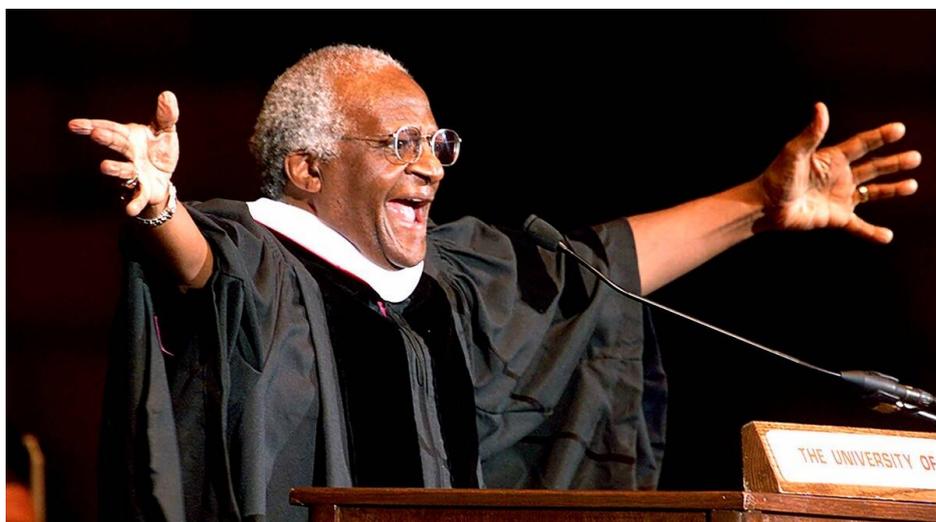


LOVE

“Archbishop Tutu was a prophet and priest, a man of words and action, one who embodied the hope and joy that were the foundations of his life. He was a man of extraordinary personal courage and bravery: when the police burst into Capetown Cathedral, he defied them by dancing down the aisle.”

“He was a man of enormous vision: seeing the possibilities for building the Rainbow Nation long before anyone else, except perhaps President Mandela. His vision and bravery were allied with a canny political sense and wisdom, enabling him to be a healer and apostle of peace while so many still saw wounds and war. Most of all he was a Christian disciple – that was the root of everything else. After meeting him, many would speak of being in the presence of one who brought God close to them.”

“His joy, grace, laughter, hope and life caught up those around him with a sense of Jesus Christ.”

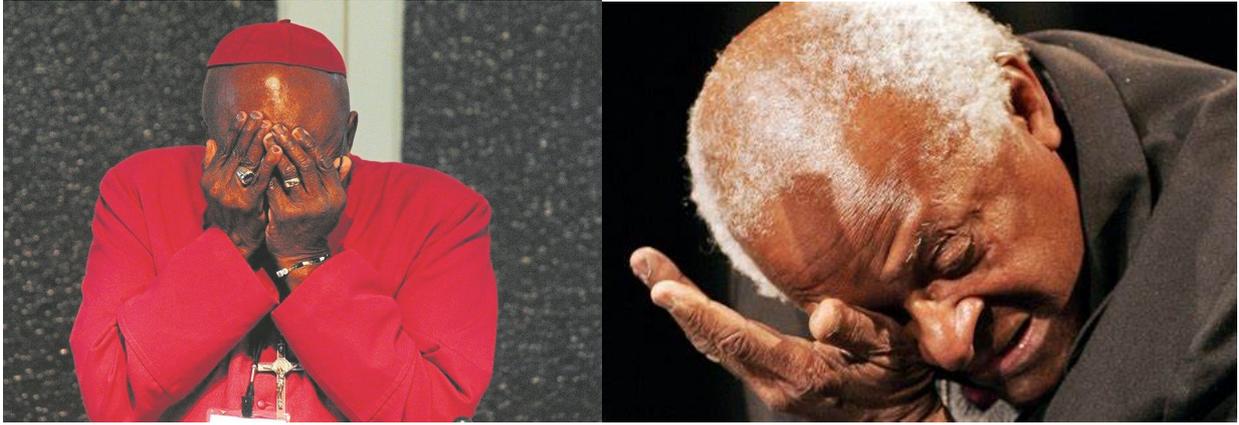


LAUGH

“It was Jesus’ love we saw in his eyes, Jesus’ compassion we heard in his voice, Jesus’ joy we heard in his laughter, Jesus’ face we saw in his face. And it was beautiful and brave.”

“Tutu's finest hour came when he chaired the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which was set up to bear witness to, record and in some cases grant amnesty to the perpetrators of apartheid-relation human rights violations, as well as rule on reparation and the rehabilitation of victims....The truth," Tutu had warned ahead of the first hearings in April 1996, "is going to hurt." And it did; on the TRC's second day, Tutu himself broke down, weeping, while listening to a victim describe how he was tortured by security police.”

“I could not hold back the tears,” he said. “I just broke down and sobbed like a child. The floodgates opened. I bent over the table and covered my face with my hands. I told people afterward that I cry easily and wondered whether I was the right person to lead the commission since I was so weak and so vulnerable.”



CRY

“Tutu was so mortified that the media had focused on his emotions rather than victims’ testimony that he resolved to only weep at home or at church – and not at the hearings. He remained deeply disturbed by the stories of anguish and suffering of the witnesses but expressed amazement that many victims were not consumed by hatred and were willing to forgive their torturers.”

Tutu’s life may inspire us to return to scripture and read and reflect again about loving, crying, hope, joy and laughter:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him...(John 3, 16-17)

A time to weep, and a time to laugh;

a time to mourn, and a time to dance...(Ecclesiastes 3,4)

As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it....(Luke 19, 41)

Jesus wept (for his friend, Lazarus and for those bereft in their loss)(John 11, 35)

Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy;
then they said among the nations,
The LORD has done great things for them.

Those who sow in tears shall reap with shouts of joy. He who goes out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, bringing his sheaves with him....
(Psalm 126, 2 and 5-6)

He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away...(Revelation 21, 4)

“Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied. “Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh...(Luke 6,21)

The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing... (Zephaniah 3,17)

For you shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands...

(Isaiah 55,12)

Archbishop Tutu wrote the following words as a prayer and they were set to music by John Bell. I have put two links below to hymn versions of the prayer. The first is very much a setting of our time, recorded in one of the Coronavirus Lockdowns, the second is in a more conventional setting.

[Goodness Is Stronger than Evil - Bing video](#)

Goodness is stronger than evil, Love is stronger than hate;

Light is stronger than darkness, life is stronger than death;

Victory is ours, Victory is ours

through God who loves us.

Victory is ours, Victory is ours

through God who loves us.

Music by John Bell

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["Goodness is Stronger than Evil", Desmond Tutu/John Bell - YouTube](#)